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ABSTRACT

Produced for use in a coordinated program of studies for students in the Connecticut Migratory Children's Program and for other students whose native language is Spanish, this book about the Indians of Puerto Rico is intended as supplementary reading material for pre-school through fifth grade. The book, illustrated with black and white drawings, traces the history and culture of the various Indian groups who settled in Puerto Rico, and describes the environment in which they lived. The narrative section is followed by eight learning activities (putting events in order, drawing an Indian village from its description, comparing two Indian groups, defining words, completing sentences, writing a story, comparing Indian and European life, and a crossword puzzle). (CM)

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THE INDIANS OF PUERTO RICO

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Connecticut Migratory Children's Program

THE INDIANS OF PUERTO RICO

1977

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Connecticut State Department of Education

All Puerto Ricans are Americans. They have always been Americans because Puerto Rico is part of the Americas. At one time Puerto Ricans were born citizens of Spain, but now they are born citizens of the United States. Before Spain controlled Puerto Rico, there were Indians on the island. The island was not called Puerto Rico then. It was called Borinquén.

Puerto Rico is a sunny island in the Caribbean Sea. It is 100 miles long and 35 miles wide. It is located southeast of Florida in a family of islands called the Antilles, in the West Indies. It has mountains and rivers, plants and trees, bushes and flowers and small animals. For hundreds of years no one lived on the island, so it had no name. The mountains and rivers did not have names either. When the first people came to live on the island they gave it the name of Borinquén. They also named the mountains and rivers and plants.

The first people came in small boats with oars and sails. They had found a beautiful place to make their homes.

When the first people arrived they gave names to the plants and flowers. We do not remember all of the names, but today we call them:

1. Palma Real
2. Bambú
3. Campanilla
4. Maga
5. Flamboyán

4.

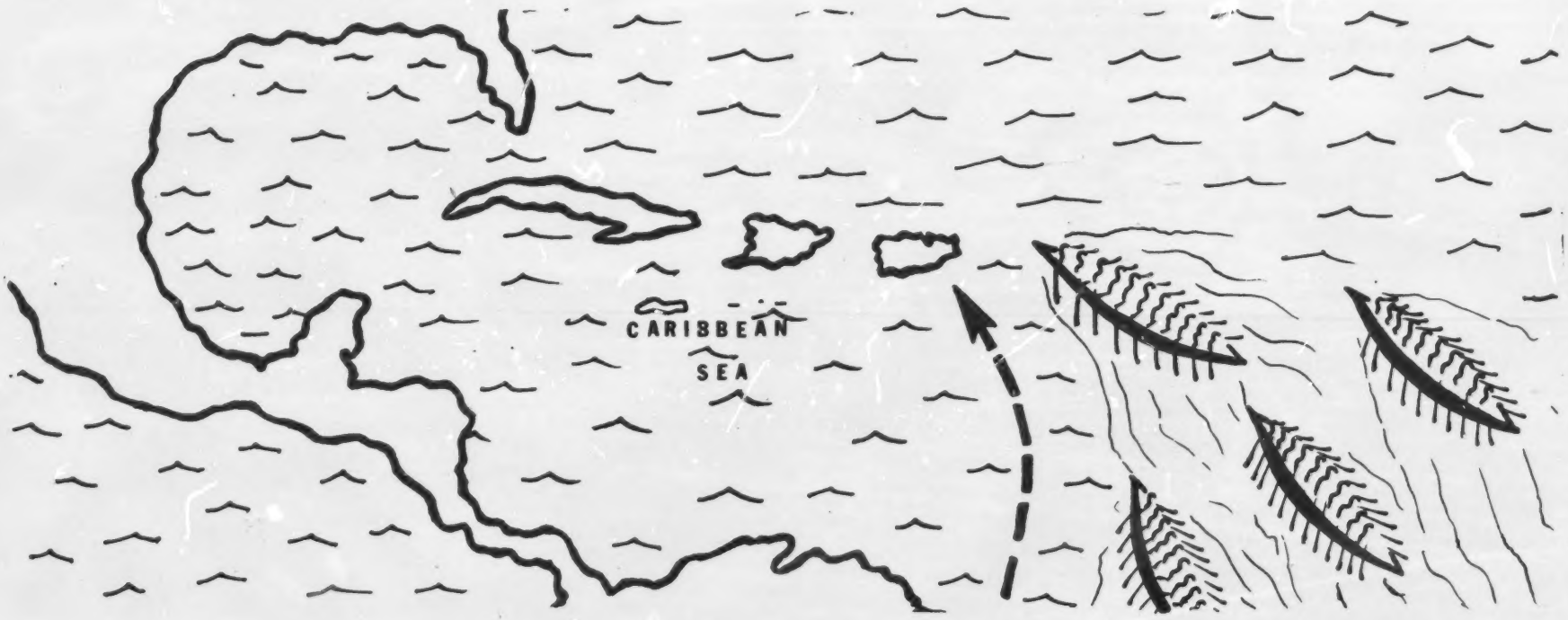
A range of mountains stretches through the center of the island. The mountains are high, and rain clouds from the sea bump into them. The rain falls in the mountains and makes waterfalls and rivers which flow to the sea. The sun and rain help many trees and vines to grow. This forms a rain forest. The sun and rain also cause many beautiful flowers and plants to grow.

Pineapples, guava and sweet potatoes grew on the island. But there were no people there to eat them or prepare food. Small animals like rodents, frogs, and snakes lived under the bushes. They ate plants and insects. Fish lived in the rivers and streams. Shellfish lived on the rocks of the shore.

The first people found it a beautiful place to live, so, they decided to stay and make their homes there.

No one really knows the names of the first people to visit the island. They might have been the Siboney Indians who also lived in Cuba. They did not live there long. We know they were there because they left small objects behind.

Sometimes the Carib Indians from the south visited the island. They were Indians who raided other islands and ate people. Other people were very afraid of them. The Caribbean Sea is named after them.



The earliest people we know about who lived and stayed on the little island were called the Archaic Indians. They are believed to have come from the part of the United States now called Florida. We do not know very much about this group except that they lived by fishing. Later another group of Indians came from the Orinoco-Amazon region of South America to Venezuela and across the Caribbean Sea. They were called Arawaks.

Nobody knows why they came to the new island. People usually move from one place to another because they hope life will be better. Perhaps there is more food, more water, or there are more jobs. Sometimes raiders or wars drive them away from their homes.

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Nobody knows when the Arawaks first came to the Island. But people now call them the "ancient ones," which makes us think they came to the Island many, many hundreds of years ago. They were a peaceful, gentle farming people.

The first Arawak Indians were called the Igneri. They came in boats made of hollowed out logs which were square in the front. They paddled the boats with carved wooden oars. One man sat in the back to steer the boat. It is from the Arawak word for "boat" that we get the word canoe.

The Igneri spoke a similar language to that of the other Indians in the Caribbean Sea. They liked to work in clay. They made many fine clay pots, images and utensils.

The second group of Arawak Indians were called the Taino. They were farmers. They liked to plant and grow their food. They grew sweet potatoes, pineapples, guavas and citrus fruits.

People around the world have different ways of making their own special bread from flour. The Taino made their flour out of the roots of the Cassava plant. The roots are called Manioc. They shredded the roots, ground them, put a little water on them, formed them into flat cakes, and baked them. This was called Casabe bread. This bread lasted a long time without spoiling. Today we use Manioc to make tapioca.

The Taino caught fish along the banks of the rivers and at the seashore. They found shellfish on the rocks by the sea.

22 23

The Taino Indians were peaceful and gentle. But they also had warriors to protect them from the Carib raiding parties.

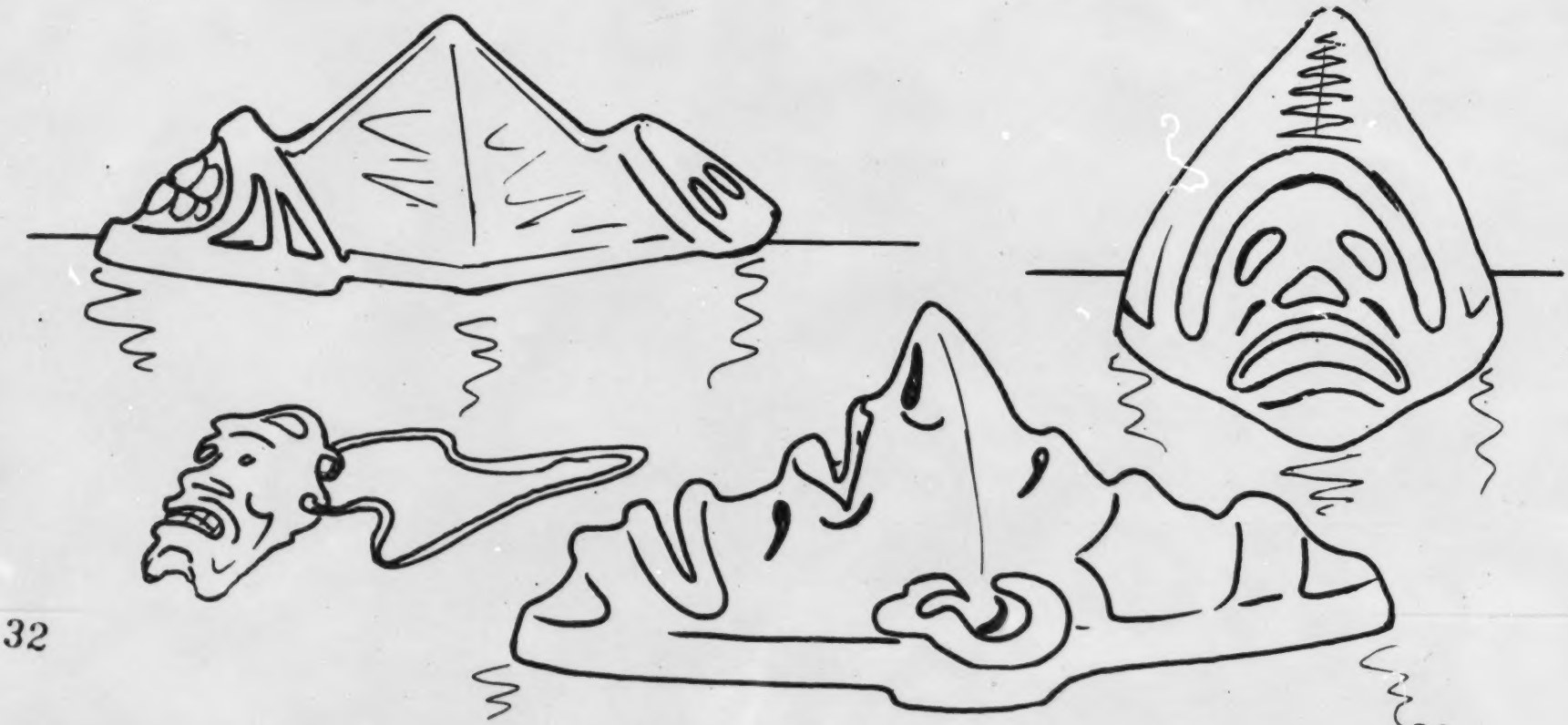
They lived in groups and were ruled over by a chief called a Cacique. When the chief wanted to talk to his people he called them together in a special place in the center of the village. It was called the batey, or ceremonial grounds. The Taino also played ball games there, and danced to the music of wooden instruments, maracas, guiros (guicharos), and hollow log drums.

Taino boys were taught how to hunt for small animals and fish. They helped build the houses by tying branches together, and weaving twigs and grass into them. There was not much time for climbing trees and swimming.

The Taino girls helped their mothers plant guayava, pineapples and batatas. They helped shred and grind the manioc into flour between two stones. They helped cook the fish caught by their fathers and brothers on stick racks over an open fire. The Arawak called the rack a barbecue. They used calabash gourds for eating and carrying water, and they used clay pottery for cooking.

The Arawaks wore little clothing. The men wore loin cloths, and married women wore a nagua which was like a skirt. They painted their bodies with designs, symbols and tattoos in bright colors. Their colors came from plants and soils. The colors they used were mostly reds, whites, and yellows.

In an Arawak village, each group of families made up a clan. Each clan had a man who carved stones and wood in the shapes of men, women, animals, birds, flowers, and geometrical shapes. These objects were called Cemis. They had faces carved on them and sometimes were decorated with gold. The Taino believed the Cemis were like gods who could help the crops to grow, hold the souls of dead ancestors, or protect them against evil.



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Each village had many Cemis which everyone worshipped. The Arawak had one good god and one evil god. The name of the good god was Yukiyu and the evil god was called Huracán.

Every year after the hot season, Huracán caused the strong winds to blow, the rains to fall, and the sea to rage. He washed away their houses and trees.

Today, after the hot summer, in late August and September, tropical storms develop that are called hurricanes. They are named after the evil god of the Arawaks.

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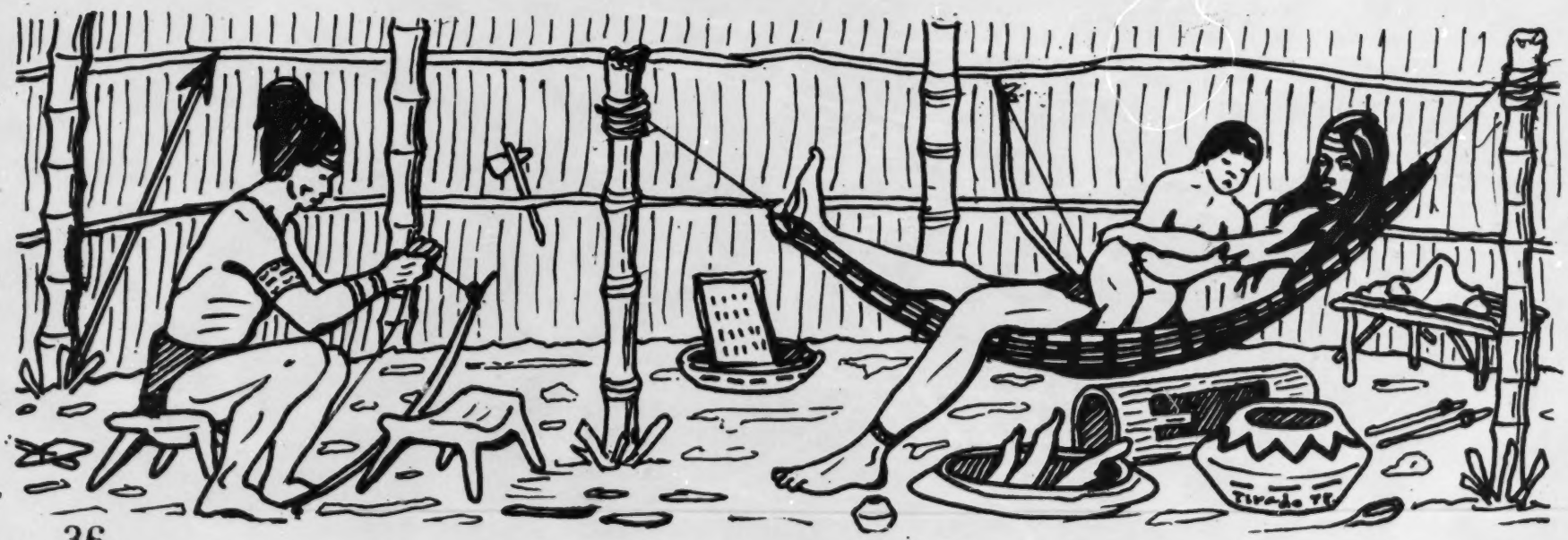
The Arawak families lived in round thatch huts. These were called bohios. The bohios were made from bamboo and tree branches tied together. Grass was woven into them and they were packed with mud. Some huts were raised off the ground. This may have been for air circulation or to keep out snakes and insects. The people slept in cotton nets hanging between posts inside the huts. They sometimes tied them to trees outside the huts. These nets were called hammocks. When the sailors from Columbus' ship saw these hammocks in 1493, they put them on their ships to sleep in. They were more comfortable than the hard wooden decks.



In the Taino village there was one great house where the Cacique lived. It was made of thatch and bamboo with woven grass and mud like the other houses. It was square in shape and was called the Caney. The great house stood at one end of the ceremonial grounds, and the other houses were around the outer edge.

At the edge of the village there was a tall tower made of bamboo and wood facing the sea. Lookouts stayed in this tower to watch the sea for Carib Indians. They were afraid the Caribs would come in raiding parties to kidnap the women and children and kill the warriors. The Taino were peaceful and gentle. Their weapons were small. They had bows and arrows, knives, and heavy sticks called macanas. Because the Caribs were warlike and cannibals, the Taino would run to the mountains to hide.

When a Taino Indian died they were buried with care. The Tainos believed in an after life and buried the dead with things that they would need in the after life. This might include pots, weapons and tools.

The carved Cemi was used to talk to the dead and to get assistance from the spirits.

The Taino also drew, or painted, religious symbols and pictures of small animals on cave walls, rock walls and river embankments. These are called <u>petroglyphs</u>.

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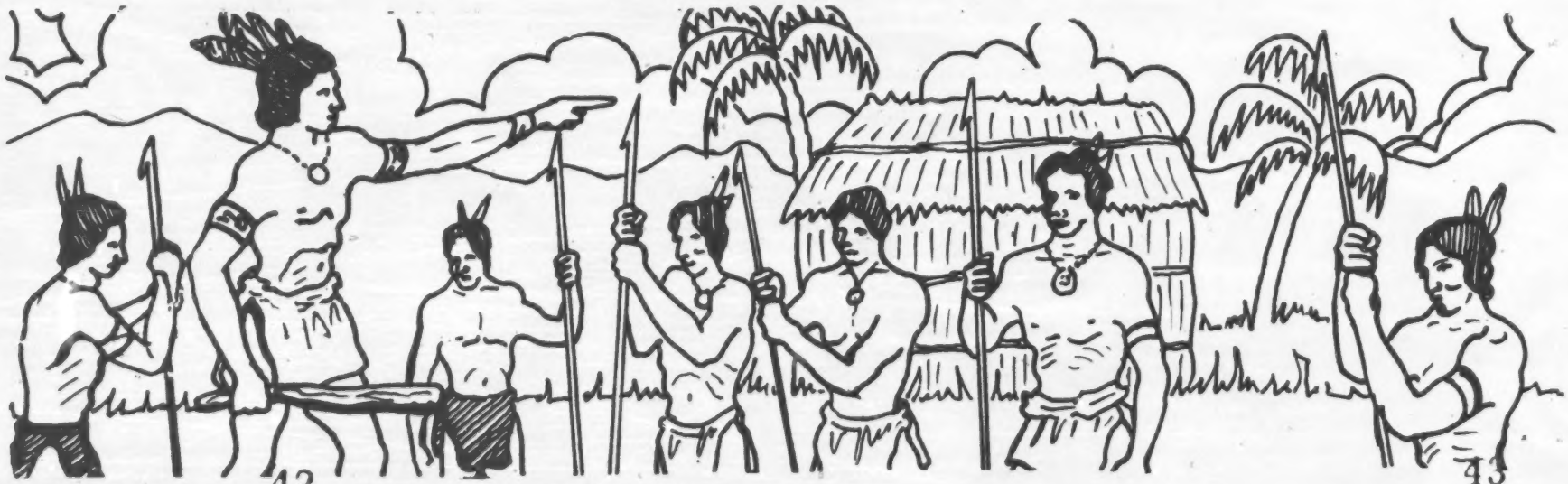
The Cacique was chief over fifty clans. The territory he ruled was called a Cacicazo. There were several caciques on the island of Borinquén, but one cacique was supreme over all the others.

The nobles were under the Cacique as were the warriors who supported him. They fought to protect the village and the people. The people worked to support the nobles and the chief.

There was also a priest called a buhiti in the village. He remembered the Taino history and told them stories of famous caciques and warriors and of important historical events. He was a priest, doctor and teacher.

The artisans and craftsmen were of the working class. They made tools and seats for the caciques, called dujos, and they carved the cemis and other religious images.



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20.

The Arawaks lived on Borinquén for 500 or 600 years. At one time there were about 300,000 Arawaks on the Antilles and islands of the Caribbean Sea. About 50,000 lived on the island of Borinquén.

Some villages today still have their Arawak names, such as Utuado, Barranquitas, Arecibo, and Anasco.

Over the years, more Arawaks came to the island to live. Some might have moved from one village to another. Some formed new villages when the older villages got too large. They were migrants.

The Arawaks worked their gardens and fields. They fished and hunted small animals. They worshipped their gods and rebuilt their homes after Huricán or the Carib raiders destroyed them.

One day, after about 500 or 600 years, a strange thing took place -- something that never happened to the Arawaks before. It probably happened near the village of Aguada on the northwestern shore of the island. White men arrived. It was Columbus and his crew.

The lookouts must have been watching from their towers the night Columbus sailed his ships near their village and dropped anchor because the next morning, when Columbus came to the shore, the village was deserted. The people had fled to the mountains in fear.

They must have been frightened by the giant "canoe" with its large masts and sails and the small "canoe" which the men used to come ashore. The men who came had white skin. They were covered with strange clothes. Some wore metal armor and helmets. The Arawaks thought they were gods and hid until they were gone.

Columbus wanted to get fresh water for his crew. He also wanted to return several women he had rescued from the Caribs and brought home.

Columbus arrived, by our calendars, on November 19, 1493, and sailed away on November 22nd. Things on Borinquén would never be the same again. The first thing he changed was the name of the island. Columbus named it San Juan Bautista. He called the people who lived there "Indians."

Soon a new kind of migrant arrived, the Spaniards.

FIRST ACTIVITY

Read each event listed in the boxes on the sides of this page. and copy them below in the order that they occurred in history. Re-read the story if you need help.

Puerto Rico was called Borinquén.

Christopher Columbus arrived in Borinquén.

The Archaic Indians made their homes in Borinquén.

First _____

_____

Second _____

_____

Third _____

_____

Fourth _____

_____

Fifth _____

_____

Sixth _____

_____

Seventh _____

_____

The first Arawak Indians called the Igneri came to Borinquén.

Borinquén was named San Juan Bautista.

Spaniards came to live in San Juan Bautista

The second group of Arawak Indians called the Taino came to Borinquén.

SECOND ACTIVITY

Read the following description of a Taino village and then draw a picture of that village below. Everything mentioned in the description should be in your picture. You can add other things that you think should go in the picture.

TAINO VILLAGE: This village is by the sea. In the middle of the village is a ceremonial ground. The cacique has a large thatched house at one end of the ceremonial ground and the houses of the other people living in the village are around the other sides of the ceremonial ground. Near the cacique's house there is a cemi on the ground and at the other end of the ceremonial ground there is a barbecue pit on which some fish are being cooked. Near the edge of the sea there is a tall watchtower.

THIRD ACTIVITY

Which would you rather be - a Taino Indian or a Carib Indian? Write a paragraph explaining why.

indio taíno

indio caribe

FOURTH ACTIVITY

In each section of this page there is a word given which comes from the Taino culture. Look up each word in the dictionary and copy down the definition given in the dictionary. You may add a picture as part of your definition, but write the definition also.

CANOE

HURRICANE

BARBECUE

HAMMOCK

26.

FIFTH ACTIVITY — Put the right words or phrases in the blank spaces. You may re-read the story to find the best words or phrases.

1. Puerto Rico is located in the _____. It is in a group of islands called _____.
2. In the center of the island there stretches a tall _____.
3. The Igneri Indians came to Puerto Rico in boats made of _____ called _____.
4. The Taino Indians were _____ and _____ people.
5. The Carib Indians were _____.
6. The Taino Indians lived in houses called _____.
7. The _____ were made of carved stones and wood and were sometimes decorated with _____.
8. The god _____ was the evil god of the Taino Indians.
9. Christopher Columbus came to Puerto Rico in the year _____.
10. Christopher Columbus changed the name of the island from Borinquén to _____.

SIXTH ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a Taino Indian who saw Christopher Columbus come ashore in Puerto Rico. How did you feel when you saw his ship? Circle the words on the left that describe how you felt. Make a list of words on the right that describe what you did. Now use both sets of words to write a story about how you felt and what you did when you saw Columbus' ship.

EXCITED
SAD
SCARED
FRIGHTENED
INTERESTED
CURIOUS
ANGRY
CONFUSED
UNBELIEVABLE
WEIRD

SEVENTH ACTIVITY

Make believe Columbus' ships sank on the rocks, and Columbus lived for the rest of his life on Borinquén. Make a list of five things that Christopher Columbus would have had to change about his way of life if he was going to stay with the Tainos and live the way they did.

60

ONE _____

_____

TWO _____

_____

THREE _____

_____

FOUR _____

_____

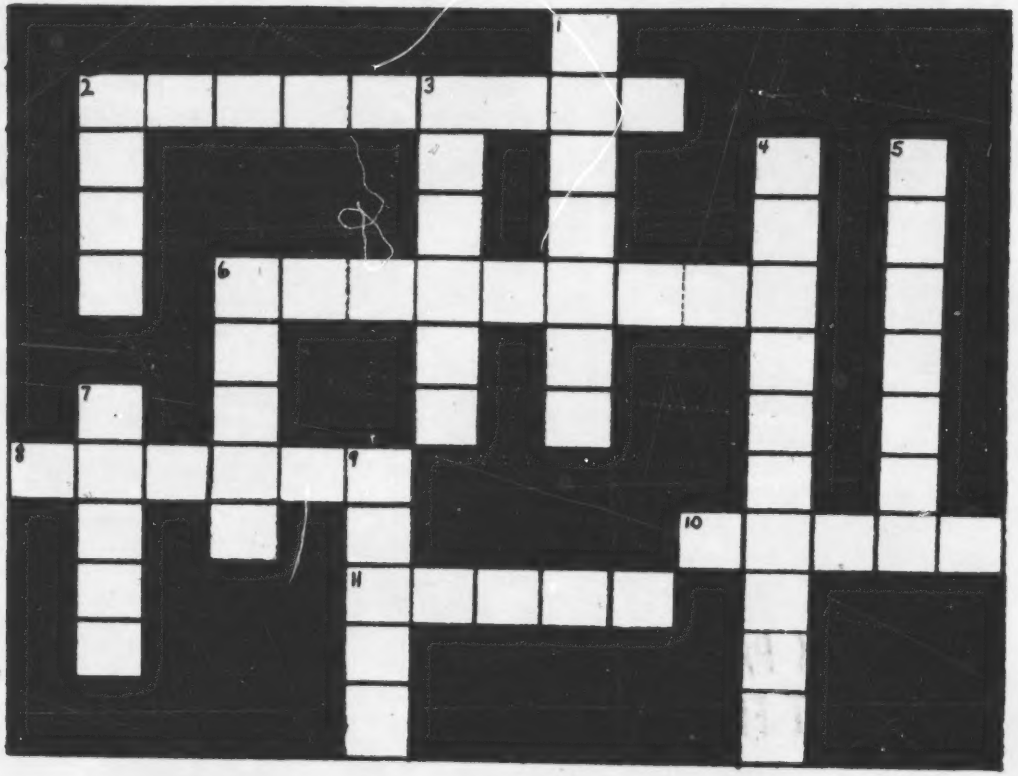
FIVE _____

_____

61

EIGHTH ACTIVITY

Complete the Crossword Puzzle by filling in the blanks in the sentences below.



DOWN

1. The chief of a Taino clan was called the _____.
2. A _____ was carved from stone or wood sometimes decorated with gold.
3. The priest of the Taino village was called the _____.
4. The Carib Indians were fierce _____.
5. _____ was the evil god of the Tainos.
6. A Taino family lived in a hut called a _____.
7. The house where the cacique lived was the _____.
9. _____ is the Taino word that means boat.

ACROSS

2. Puerto Rico is located in the _____ Sea.
6. The first name for Puerto Rico was _____.
8. Taino women ground flour from roots called _____.
10. The second group of Arawak Indians to come to Borinquén were the _____ Indians.
11. The skirt worn by a Taino woman was called a _____.